



Town of Westport 2001 Annual Meeting

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND

Diane Goss Farrell

First Selectwoman

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND

VISION STATEMENT:

“Westport will be an attractive residential Town with a vibrant downtown area and a healthy environment for commercial endeavors. Our town will welcome all people and will continue to attract individuals who are leaders in all facets of society. Westport will have the feeling of a New England town with the conveniences of modern life. The quality of life will be high through the conservation of our natural resources, preservation of our traditions and support of community events. We will meet the recreational needs of our citizens by providing a wide range of leisure activities. Town government will offer quality services that are effective and efficient. Recognizing that our society’s strength is based upon an educated populace, we will devote proper resources to this endeavor. In keeping with our town meeting heritage, all citizens will be encouraged to join in the civic dialogue with diverse opinions in order to fully explore and answer questions facing the Town.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND

- **Purpose: To discuss and plan for the future of Westport**

Present

Near Term

Future

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS

- **The New York metropolitan region will continue its economic growth rate with occasional blips.**
- **Fairfield County will continue its historical economic growth, but at a more modest rate.**

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES

- **Westport should remain a residential community comprised primarily of single-family homes.**
- **Westport should continue to maintain a retail sector and continue to attract small businesses, particularly those engaged in the “think industry.”**
- **Westport should continue to promote a high quality of life by devoting resources toward education, cultural and recreational activities and to maintain the “feel” of a small New England town.**
- **Westport shall strive to be a “caring community” and practice tolerance as a way of life.**

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND MAJOR ISSUES

- **Increased school enrollment requires new classroom construction, as well as increases in operating expenses.**
- **With a projected tax increase to average 7.29% annually over the next five years, increasing by 55.85% in ten years, the Town must focus on mitigating the impact on residents of modest means. Westport has reached essentially full development emphasizing residential use and encouraging diversity of housing stock. The commercial/retail sector will be maintained with particular emphasis on the greater downtown area.**
- **As the aging population becomes a growing proportion of our population, the needs and desires of senior residents must be addressed.**

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND MAJOR ISSUES

- **Environmental standards must be maintained and enforced, while balancing the rights of property owners.**
- **Ways to alleviate growing transportation pressures must be found to ensure Westport's ability to attain many of its primary goals.**
- **We must help to strengthen our neighboring cities.**

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND

DISCUSSION OF WESTPORT'S PLANS



Plan discussion by category:

- **Environment & Land Use**
- **Government Services & Infrastructure**
- **Health & Human Services**
- **Parks & Recreation**
- **Public Protection**
- **Taxes & Information Technology**
- **The Arts**
- **Transportation & Regionalization**

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

KEY ISSUES:

- **Land Acquisition/Funding/Divestiture**
- **Housing Stock**
- **Downtown Area**
- **Waste Water Treatment**

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Land Acquisition/Funding/Divestiture

Present

- The Town desires to acquire land adjacent to the Long Lots School to accommodate both school and municipal needs.
- The Land Acquisition Committee is working with the owner of a large private parcel to explore the possibility of Town acquisition outside of traditional funding.
- The Real Property Acquisition fund received \$100,000 this fiscal year.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Land Acquisition/Funding/Divestiture



Near Term

- The Land Acquisition Committee and Administration will continue to seek out opportunities to acquire key parcels of land as defined in the Town Plan of Conservation & Development.
- A list of potential parcels for divestiture, including Maplewood Avenue and Waterside Terrace, has been created; no formal action has been taken.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Land Acquisition/Funding/Divestiture

Future

- Divestiture as a means to offset bonding for other land purchases will be explored. Since land is not a renewable asset but rather an “heirloom” asset, it will be important to consider the true value of what might only be short-term gains.
- Attempts to increase contributions to the Real Property Acquisition Fund up to \$500,000 annually will be pursued - most likely to occur once the rising tide of Board of Education capital and operating expenditures recedes.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Housing Stock

Present

- The effects of tearing down and building of “big” houses continues.
- Affordable housing needs are not being met according to the Connecticut State Housing Authority or the Town’s own objectives.
- No assisted-living facilities exist in Westport.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Housing Stock

Near Term

- The Planning & Zoning Commission is reviewing regulations addressing development impact through building height, coverage and size. A balance must be struck between the rights of a property owner and impact on the neighborhood. Planning & Zoning members note that any changes will be incremental.
- Affordable housing needs will be addressed by: 1) exploration of land acquisition by the Town for this purpose; and 2) consideration of expansion of Westport Housing Authority property.
- Currently no developers are proposing an assisted living facility project. Concerns about land availability and neighborhood impact due to scale have been expressed.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Housing Stock



- Changes in the economy could, to a degree, result in an unforeseen impact on housing.
- Planning “gurus” are critical of current zoning philosophies. Suggestion of “mixed use” concepts that blend retail, residential and commercial are becoming more popular, especially when dealing with broader, regional issues such as transportation.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Downtown Area

Present

- The Downtown Planning Committee, comprised of members of the Planning & Zoning Commission and the First Selectwoman, are working with consultants, Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart, Inc., to create a comprehensive downtown plan due in spring/summer 2001.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Downtown Area

Near Term

- Elements of the downtown plan will be brought forward once the plan has been completed. The permanent Center for Senior Activities will be the first initiative.

Future

- Implementation of the plan will take many years as cost and land use decisions dictate.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Waste Water Treatment

Present

- The Planning & Zoning Commission has placed a moratorium on sewer applications until the waste water treatment facility upgrade study is completed, (estimated summer 2001).
- Residents of Saugatuck Shores have requested sewers. Talks have begun between the Town and the City of Norwalk to take the effluent to the Norwalk plant.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

Key Issue: Waste Water Treatment

Near Term

- The Town will explore: 1) changing the sewer request protocol from a first-come/first-serve basis to an environmental prioritization basis; 2) mandating periodic septic system pump outs; and 3) creation of a septic replacement fund similar to sewer financing.

Future

- Changing environmental laws and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection regulations, (such as the nitrogen credit program), will continually impact waste water treatment facility operations.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

OTHER RELATED ISSUES:

- Ongoing participation in the Sasco Brook pollution abatement program. Recent news from “Listen to the Sound 2000” announced Sasco Brook as part of a region-wide abatement program to include federal funding.
- Shellfish beds remain in dispute with State.
- Cell towers and their impact on residential neighborhoods remain a problem. The Town continues its litigation against the Connecticut Siting Council and cellular carriers regarding the Sunny Lane site.

WESTPORT 2001 AND BEYOND ENVIRONMENT & LAND USE

OTHER RELATED ISSUES (continued):

- Conservation education is ongoing, including storm drain stenciling and educational materials enclosed in tax notices.
- A permanent brush/leaf transfer area located off the Sherwood Island Connector has been proposed.
- There are no plans to expand commercial zones.
- As business changes, so may land use, (i.e., more telecommuting and e-business).
- Efforts to classify and preserve historical properties continue.
- Early stages toward dredging the Saugatuck River are underway.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND GOVERNMENT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

KEY ISSUES:

- **Sewers**
- **Schools**
- **Maintenance**

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND GOVERNMENT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Key Issue: Sewers

Present

- The Town's current waste water treatment plant capacity is at 75%, servicing 27% of residential and 85% of commercial properties. At maximum plant capacity, approximately one thousand additional residents can be serviced.
- A moratorium was placed on sewer petitions by the Planning & Zoning Commission in April 2000 pending the findings of the plant upgrade study that is currently underway.
- The largest sewerage project, Saugatuck Shores, is moving forward. Talks with Norwalk to accept the effluent are in process.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND GOVERNMENT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Key Issue: Sewers

Near Term

- The treatment facility study is expected to be complete by September 2001.

Future

- Critical decisions will need to be made regarding the future of the plant, as well as plans for expanded sewerage. Cost, as well as control of development, will be critical factors. It is highly unlikely that all of Westport will ever be sewerred.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND GOVERNMENT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Key Issue: Schools

Present

- School construction is ongoing. The new Bedford Middle School will open in fall '01. The present Bedford Middle School on Riverside Avenue will close in June '01, be refurbished and reopen as Saugatuck Elementary School in September '02.
- The last remaining school building project will focus on the high school. The Staples High School Subcommittee of the School Building Committee is currently working on concept plans that will be forwarded to the Planning & Zoning Commission as an 8-24 Report request in June.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND GOVERNMENT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Key Issue: Schools

Near Term

- Staples High School costs are yet to be determined. Total expenditures for all school construction projects to date are \$67,233,798.
- Parking problems continue to plague Long Lots Elementary School. Purchase of the six-acre 11 Hyde Lane parcel would provide two acres of additional on-site parking.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND GOVERNMENT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Key Issue: Schools

Future

- Re-purposing of schools when the school age population declines remains a focus. Suggestions offered at the January 2001 planning summit centered around insuring that maintenance not be deferred, that the Town never sell excess school buildings, and if leased that a clear-cut “recapture provision” be negotiated.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND GOVERNMENT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Key Issue: Maintenance



Present

- The Town has systematically worked to repair and upgrade buildings and grounds. The Selectman's Maintenance Study Committee is preparing an inventory of all town-owned properties.
- The Town and Board of Education have been working cooperatively on joint maintenance issues. No plans to consolidate exist at this time.
- The Farm House at Longshore Club Park, after a decades-long debate, will be demolished this spring.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND GOVERNMENT SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

Key Issue: Maintenance

Near Term

- Once the building inventory is complete, a number of reviews will take place; including insurance coverage and long-term maintenance plans.

Future

- As time moves forward, consolidation of maintenance functions between the Town and Board of Education should be effected.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

KEY ISSUES:

- **Permanent Senior Center**
- **Youth Services**
- **Disease Control, including West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease**

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Key Issue: Permanent Senior Center

Present

- Architects are evaluating two potential sites for a new permanent facility of approximately 11,000 square feet. Results of their analysis will be forwarded to the Downtown Planning Consultants for incorporation.

Near Term

- Preliminary plan approval (8-24 Report) and funding requests will commence shortly after the downtown plan has been finalized.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Key Issue: Permanent Senior Center

Future

- With attractive programming and a convenient downtown location, the potential exists for the senior center to grow and become a de facto community center.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Key Issue: Youth Services

Present

- The Youth Commission, the largest appointed town commission, has been proactive advocating for more youth activities, including miniature golf.
- Through Positive Youth Development initiatives in cooperation with United Way, Westport schools and community agencies “risky behaviors,” including drug and alcohol abuse, are being addressed through a variety of measures. Parent forums, a variety of after-school and mentoring programs, increased counseling services, and a recent Board of Education breathalyzer initiative provide a few examples.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Key Issue: Youth Services

Near Term

- The downtown planning consultants are considering location of a miniature golf course on the Baron's South property.
- Westport police have initiated an ordinance proposal that will enable greater enforcement of underage drinking violations as part of a community policing program.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Key Issue: Youth Services



- Recognizing social and demographic changes occurring nationally, diversity and issues of tolerance in Westport continue to be critical.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Key Issue: Disease Control, including West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease



Present

- The Westport/Weston Health District continues its work as part of a three-year federal grant to create programs designed to prevent the spread of Lyme Disease. Mailings and advertising the “*Tick Off*” campaign are underway.
- Storm drain larvaciding will again be initiated as a means to thwart the spread of the West Nile Virus disease.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

**Key Issue: Disease Control, including West Nile Virus
and Lyme Disease**

Near Term

- Summertime will be critical as development of both diseases reaches peak.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

**Key Issue: Disease Control, including West Nile Virus
and Lyme Disease**

Future

- Issues regarding deer control (i.e., hunting) will no doubt surface if the population increases.
- The future is always a “wildcard” when it comes to health issues.
- Long-term environmental impact of pesticides must be monitored.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

KEY ISSUES:

- **Longshore Improvements**
- **Demands for Passive, Active and Open Spaces**

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

Key Issue: Longshore Improvements

Present

- Plans are underway for a tennis/ice skating/concession building.
- The Longshore Sailing School renovation project is under construction to be completed this spring.

Near Term

- Request for approvals for the tennis/ice skating/concession building will take place this summer. Construction to commence this fall.
- Planning for improvements to the golf course, as part of the Longshore Master Plan Phase IV, will be shortly.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

Key Issue: Longshore Improvements



Future

- Negotiations with the proprietor of The Inn at Longshore will commence in the next year or two. At that time, the Town will need to decide plans for the building that might include more town use in exchange for reduced revenues.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

Key Issue: Demands for Passive, Active and Open Spaces



Present

Baron's Property South: Open to the public from dawn to dusk; most buildings have been repaired for future use or to prevent further deterioration.

Winslow Park: A new paved 25-car parking lot has been created to facilitate greater use.

Stonybrook Property: Remains passive as it is adjacent to The Nature Center for Environmental Activities.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

Key Issue: Demands for Passive, Active & Open Spaces



Poses Property: Remains passive with very limited public access (no roadway).

Allen's Clam & Lobster House: Grounds will be open to the public this spring for non-motorized boat launch and passive use.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

Key Issue: Demands for Passive, Active and Open Spaces



Town Common: An unofficial “Veterans’ Park.”

Town Beaches: Maintenance efforts and improvements are ongoing, including dock replacement at the E.R. Strait Marina.

Playing Fields: Fields next to the new Bedford Middle School will reopen soon.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

Key Issue: Demands for Passive, Active and Open Spaces

Near Term

- Recommendations from the Downtown Planning Study will impact Jesup Green, Winslow Park, Baron's Property South, and the Town Common. Among their preliminary recommendations, the downtown planners suggest that Winslow Park remain passive open space; Baron's Property South be developed, but remain primarily open space. They are working to create an "emerald necklace" linking other downtown parcels.
- The Town awaits the findings of the Greenwich court case involving public access to Connecticut beaches. Exclusivity to local residents will be affected by the outcome.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

Key Issue: Demands for Passive, Active and Open Spaces

Future

- Demands for playing fields continue. The purchase of the 11 Hyde Lane property would relieve some of the pressure. The Downtown Planning consultants have also recommended space at Winslow Park for this purpose.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PARKS & RECREATION

OTHER RELATED ISSUES:

- Pay-as-you-go philosophy continues vis-à-vis department operations.
- Creation of a Parks Conservancy is building slowly; a Tree Board has been formed.
- Technology improvements designed to simplify sign-up process is ongoing.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

KEY ISSUES:

- **Increased Security at the Railroad Station**
- **T.A.M.E.**
- **Community Policing**
- **Staffing Increases**

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Increased Security at the Railroad Station



- Recent crime statistics indicate an increase in auto theft at the railroad station, (+19.5% from 7/99 - 6/00), particularly Saugatuck Station. Larceny in town has increased 9.2% for the same time period. The crime of burglary has decreased by 34.3%. Capital crime is very low.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Increased Security at the Railroad Station

Near Term

- Three additional officers, (one per shift) will be hired in the new fiscal year dedicated to railroad station assignment. Railroad Parking funds shared with the Connecticut Department of Transportation will be used for this purpose.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Increased Security at the Railroad Station

Future

- Crime statistics will be monitored to determine the effectiveness of increased security. ADA improvements planned for 2002 will also enhance security at the station, as will improved platform and tunnel lighting.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: T.A.M.E.

Present

- Traffic calming remains a priority and challenge. Police continue to devote resources to dedicated speed enforcement. Additional streets will receive speed humps, (Prospect Road and Spicer Road), this spring/summer. Engineering improvements include “cats eyes”, road “narrowing” by altering travel lanes, and SMART radar. The T.A.M.E. banner is placed across Main Street as often as space is available.
- Operation Red Light, designed to enforce traffic laws at intersections, was initiated in December 2000.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: T.A.M.E.

Near Term

- T.A.M.E. efforts will continue. Streets like Roseville Road, Hillspoint Road, and Kings Highway South will be evaluated for engineering solutions.

Future

- Opportunities for speed violation revenue-sharing with the State Police needs to be pursued as a means to facilitate more T.A.M.E. efforts (especially enforcement).
- Use of cameras designed for speed measurement/enforcement, similar to other states, will be considered as the law allows.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Community Policing

Present

- Attempting to create a “*cop on the beat*” persona, the Police Department has adopted a community policing approach enhancing citizen/officer contact.

Near Term

- An important initiative to come from the community policing approach is to enact an ordinance that provides police with more latitude when dealing with teen drinking situations.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Community Policing



- Efforts to reach out to the community will continue.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Staffing Increases

Present

- In addition to the three Police Officers added to the railroad station, three more officers will be hired in anticipation of departmental retirements, allowing for seamless transition.
- With RTM approval, the Fire Department will add four additional firefighters in the 2001/2002 fiscal year. Safety needs at many accident scenes (not just fire), necessitate more support personnel.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Staffing Increases

Near Term

- Retirement of Police Department uniformed personnel will result in a head-count reduction long-term.
- Anticipated efficiencies in the Fire Department, such as reduced “wear and tear” on rolling stock, and internal maintenance should help to offset some of the expenses associated with the additional Fire Fighters.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Staffing Increases

Future

- Following Deloitte & Touche recommendations, efforts to consolidate emergency dispatch are underway.
- The nature of law enforcement will no doubt have to respond to societal and technological changes. In this instance, Westport is somewhat at the mercy of larger global issues, including: threat of terrorism, manipulation and destruction of information technology systems, a widening gap between haves and have-nots, and continued substance abuse.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND PUBLIC PROTECTION

Key Issue: Staffing Increases



- Fire prevention and suppression will continue to improve in the future. This will be achieved through improved building materials and construction, as well as ongoing education and inspection.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue:

- **Unprecedented spending will continue to require large increases in taxes for several years to come.**

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue: Unprecedented spending will continue to require large increases in taxes for several years to come.

Present

- The cost of capital projects, as a share of total spending, will rise from 9.64% in 2000-2001 to 13.30% in 2005-2006 due to a large increase in bonding for capital projects (primarily schools).
- Taxes are projected to rise 55.85% over five years for an average annual tax rate increase of 7.29%.
- An improved tax abatement/deferral/freeze program was instituted for the second year in a row.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue: Unprecedented spending will continue to require large increases in taxes for several years to come.



Present

- Tax abatement programs for volunteer EMS and Fire crews as further incentive to volunteer time and talent have been proposed.
- Use of private fund-raising as a tax offset continues, (i.e., a portion of the Allen's Clam & Lobster House property purchase).
- Use of surplus to minimize impact of higher capital projects costs has been recommended, (\$4,000,000 in 2000-2001; \$4,500,000 recommended for 2001-2002).

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue: Unprecedented spending will continue to require large increases in taxes for several years to come.

Near Term

- Creative alternatives to budgeting, such as the '01-'02 police initiative that enables the Town to hire additional sworn officers while sharing the cost with the State, will be explored wherever possible.
- Dispossession of Town-owned land will be considered as a fiscal offset to real property purchases. Selling of "heirloom" assets must be seriously weighed.
- Tax abatement and deferral programs will be evaluated as warranted as debt service and education operating expenditures rise.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue: Unprecedented spending will continue to require large increases in taxes for several years to come.

Future

- It is important to remember that debt service attributed to building costs will ultimately trail off, and deferred taxes will return to the Town's general fund.
- Statistical revaluation will take place in 2004, 2008, and a physical revaluation in 2012.
- Taxation based upon income, rather than real property, could become the major source of local revenues. This will require a change in State statutes.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue: Unprecedented spending will continue to require large increases in taxes for several years to come.



Future

- Tax abatement/deferral programs should be considered for those income eligible, regardless of age.
- Some have suggested a “value added” tax that would create a two-tier system. State enabling legislation would be required.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

KEY ISSUE:

- **Inspired by the private sector, Town government has endeavored to improve delivery of services more effectively, as well as communicate to citizens more directly.**

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue: Inspired by the private sector, Town government has endeavored to improve delivery of services more effectively, as well as communicate to citizens more directly.

Present

- Recent technology upgrades have benefited citizens in the areas of public safety (CAD system), communications (web site), and record keeping.
- Channel 73 now carries Town Hall announcements. Expanded programming will be forthcoming.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue: Inspired by the private sector, Town government has endeavored to improve delivery of services more effectively, as well as communicate to citizens more directly.

Near Term

- Communications will evolve to become more interactive and connected. Commencement of the web site Phase II has begun.
- The need for GIS (geographical information system) grows. The cost of GIS systems is dropping.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TAXES & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Key Issue: Inspired by the private sector, Town government has endeavored to improve delivery of services more effectively, as well as communicate to citizens more directly.

Future

- As information technology is more and more integrated into daily lives, greater potential exists for convenience and efficiency, including:
(a) interdepartmental networking, communication and dispatching, utilizing fiber optic connections; (b) web site interactivity utilizing online firms and signups; and (c) automated systems such as GIS to access data bases involving land use.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND

THE ARTS

KEY ISSUES:

- **Permanent Arts Center**
- **Westport's Caché is in Part Due to its Arts Heritage.**

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND

THE ARTS

Key Issue: Permanent Arts Center

Present

- Since 1998 the Arts Center has been without a permanent home. Their programs have continued to grow during this period. Recently, they conducted focus groups to determine the scope of the Center's future direction.

Near Term

- As part of the downtown planning process, a permanent Arts Center has been included as a component.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND

THE ARTS

Key Issue: Permanent Arts Center



- Once a permanent facility is created, among other enhancements, public gallery space will once again become available.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND

THE ARTS

Key Issue: Westport's Caché in Part Due to its Arts Heritage.



- The Levitt Pavilion has enjoyed increased audiences each season.
- The Arts Advisory Committee continues to work on key projects, including the film “*A Creative Community*”. The annual Arts Heritage Awards has become an important Town tradition.
- The Westport Country Playhouse is embarking upon a building improvement program that will modernize its facility. Joanne Woodward has been named artistic co-director.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND

THE ARTS

Key Issue: Westport's Caché in Part Due to its Arts Heritage.

Near Term

- The Levitt Pavilion plans a capital campaign in combination with Town funds to restore and improve the stage, as well as site .

Future

- It will be a challenge to “keep the arts alive” in Westport due to housing costs and a general change in the makeup of our population. It becomes more important therefore to keep the arts alive through Westport School programs, as well as existing arts organizations.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TRANSPORTATION & REGIONALIZATION

KEY ISSUES:

- **Traffic Congestion**
- **Land Acquisition**

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TRANSPORTATION & REGIONALIZATION

Key Issue: Traffic Congestion

Present

- The entire Southwest Region of Connecticut is experiencing traffic difficulties that could ultimately close access to the State from the south resulting in profoundly negative economic circumstances statewide.
- The Governor convened a transportation summit in September 2000 that acknowledged the problem as a statewide issue. A transportation strategy board was formed to address transportation challenges.
- TIA's (Transportation Investment Areas) have been formed as a means to link various regions of the State. Westport is part of a TIA that runs from Greenwich to New Haven to Danbury.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TRANSPORTATION & REGIONALIZATION

Key Issue: Traffic Congestion

Near Term

- Additional funding for Connecticut Department of Transportation has been requested in this year's budget to help kick off some preliminary proposed solutions. Lane expansions, ramp closures, improved mass transit initiatives, light rail service, and better use of waterways are some suggested new programs.
- Federal funding (TEA-21) for Connecticut is secure through 2003.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TRANSPORTATION & REGIONALIZATION

Key Issue: Traffic Congestion

Future

- Placement of sound barriers along I-95 continue to be a quest as yet unmet.
- Federal funding for Connecticut Department of Transportation may be reduced due to the anticipated loss of a congressional district. The entire New England region will be affected as a result of the new census data. Loss of senior legislators at the national level from the region may negatively affect funding in all northeastern states.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TRANSPORTATION & REGIONALIZATION

Key Issue: Land Acquisition



- Large tracts of land owned by the Kelda Corporation (formerly Bridgeport Hydraulic Company) are available for sale to the State of Connecticut. Purchase by the Department of Environmental Protection will insure that they are protected.
- Casino initiatives have resurfaced in Bridgeport.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TRANSPORTATION & REGIONALIZATION

Key Issue: Land Acquisition

Near Term

- The State legislature is expected to vote on the \$90 million Kelda purchase. If successful, 15,000+ acres will be preserved as open space. The land will be maintained by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. Public access will be provided.
- The issue of Indian sovereignty is currently under consideration by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as the Connecticut court system. If successful and a casino complex is built in Bridgeport, the traffic impact on the region would be profoundly negative.

WESTPORT 2001 & BEYOND TRANSPORTATION & REGIONALIZATION

Key Issue: Land Acquisition



- Control of development on a regionalized basis is critical to Westport. Traffic and environmental impacts could directly affect quality of life. SMART GROWTH, a concept adopted by the State of Maryland and espoused frequently by the University of Connecticut, takes a global view of the region, allowing for controlled development in cities and towns that compliment each other. It is hoped that State legislators will adopt such a concept.